Export of Cotton by Maharashtra State Cooperative Cotton Growers' Marketing Federation

2037. SHRI SATISH PRADHAN: Will the Minister of TEXTILES be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Maharashtra State Cooperative Cotton Growers Marketing Federation is procuring maximum quantity of cotton every year in the country; and

(b) if so, the percentage of total procurement the Federation is allowed to export and its share in the total export?

THE MINISTER OF TEXTILES (SHRI R.L. JALAPPA): (a) Since there is a monopoly procurement scheme in the State of Maharashtra alone, the Maharashtra State Cooperative Cotton Growers' Marketing Federation is obliged to buy the entire cotton produced in the state.

(b) Out of the total export quota of 15.00 lakh bales released for 1995-96, the quota allotted exclusively to the Marketing Federations of Eight cotton growing states was 6.20 lakh bales. As against this, the Maharashtra Federation was allotted a quota of 4.20 lakh bales.

Strengthening Indian Air Force

2038. SHRI SUSHILKUMAR SAMBHAJI-RAO SHINDE: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether a stock taking about the adequacy or the otherwise of the IAF aircraft and personnel strength was made, on the occasion of Air Force Day, October 8, 1996;

(b) if so, the details of the strength and the findings of the stock-taking; and

(c) the decisions taken to replenish and augment the strength?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE (SHRI N.V.N. SOMU): (a) No, Sir.

(b) and (c) In view of existing strength of personnel as well as operational and technological capabilities of existing weapon systems including aircraft, threat perception and resources, measures as considered necessary are taken on a continuous basis to maintain and enhance the technological and operational capabilities of the IAF.

Additional Irrigation Facilities for Orissa

2039. SHRI RAHASBIHARI BARIK: Will the Minister of WATER RESOURCES be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the entire irrigation potential in Orissa has not been fully utilised;

(b) if so, the steps taken to create additional irrigation facilities in Orissa during Eight Five Year Plan; and

(c) the various efforts proposed to be made to tap the irrigation potential available in that State fully?

THE MINISTER OF WATER RESOURCES (SHRI JANESHWAR MISHRA): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) In the Eighth Five Year Plan, an outlay of Rs. 3003.73 crores has been provided under the State Plan to create additional irrigation potential of 484.00 thousand hectares in Orissa. Further addition of irrigation potential in the State is also envisaged during the Ninth Five Year Plan the targets and outlays for which are yet to be finalised by the Planning Commission.

Visit of German Defence Minister of India

2040. SHRI SUSHILKUMAR SAMBHAJI-RAO SHINDE: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the German Federal Minister of Defence visited New Delhi, in October this year;

(b) if so, the specific issues discussed and agreements finalised for augmenting Indo-German cooperation in the matter of supplies and production of defence equipments, arms and air and naval crafts, including submarines; and

(c) the steps being taken by Government in pursuance thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE (SHRI N.V.N. SOMU): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) The two Defence Ministers had discussions on a wide range of subjects. The discussion did not cover the production and supply of defence equipment.

Decline in the Export of Jute

2041. SMT. JAYANTI PATNAIK: Will the Minister of TEXTILES be pleased to state:

(a) whether there have been a sharp decline in the export of jute during this year;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor;

(c) the steps taken by the Govt. in maintaining the balance in the export in jute sector; and

(d) the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF TEXTILES (SHRI R.L. JALAPPA): (a) and (b) The export of jute goods through Calcutta and Haldia ports during the period April-August, 1996 declined by 16% in terms of Quantity, over the corresponding period during 1995. However, the exports registered an increase of 14% in terms of value in the same period during 1996 as compare to 1995. Export during April-August, 1995 were worth Rs. 189.62 crores and during April-Aug, 1996 these are of Rs. 216.19 crores.

The reason for decline in export was the sharp decline in the offtake of Hessian in USA market and fall in export of sacking to all countries.

(c) and (d) The shortfall in export of jute products during April-Aug, 1996 is likely to be made good in the second half of the year as a result of competitives prices being offered by the exporters in the country and increase in the requirement of some leading importing countries.

In order to boost growth of jute exports, the Govt. has been providing external market assistance through JMDC on export of jute yarn and some other value added items, for effective competition in the International Market. Among other steps, the Govt. has been making vigorous market promotion efforts through JMDC for both diversified and traditional items through participation in trade fair/exhibition, organising buyer-seller meets, seminars and work-shop, spons oring delegation in International Markets and launching publicity and propaganda campaign under its own funds and those provided under UNDP assisted jute sector programme.

Performance of field commands and troops commands

2042. SHRI KRISHNA KUMAR BIRLA: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that key field command posts and troop level commands in the Indian Army are held by officers considered to be too old by military strategists;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether the performance of the troops led by officers who had physically past their prime is likely to be affected in any eventuality; and

(d) if so, the steps contemplated by Government in the matter?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE (SHRI N.V.N. SOMU): (a) to (d) The ages of Commanders at operational levels are well within the acceptable limits in the Indian Army as shown below. These ages are comparable with those in other Armies of the World.

(i)	Company Commanders :	27-37 years
(ii)	Battalion Commanders :	40-47 years
(iii)	Brigade Commanders :	48-51 years

Only fit officers are placed in command in operational areas.

Though physical fitness is important in a profession like Army, there is no substitute for experience. Hence a balance has to be struck between the two. The ages of Commanders are within the acceptable limits based on the present day health standards.

Telephone Connections under Asansol Telephone Exchange

2043. SHRI RAMNARAYAN GOSWAMI: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that about 40 persons have applied for telephone